
2. COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION

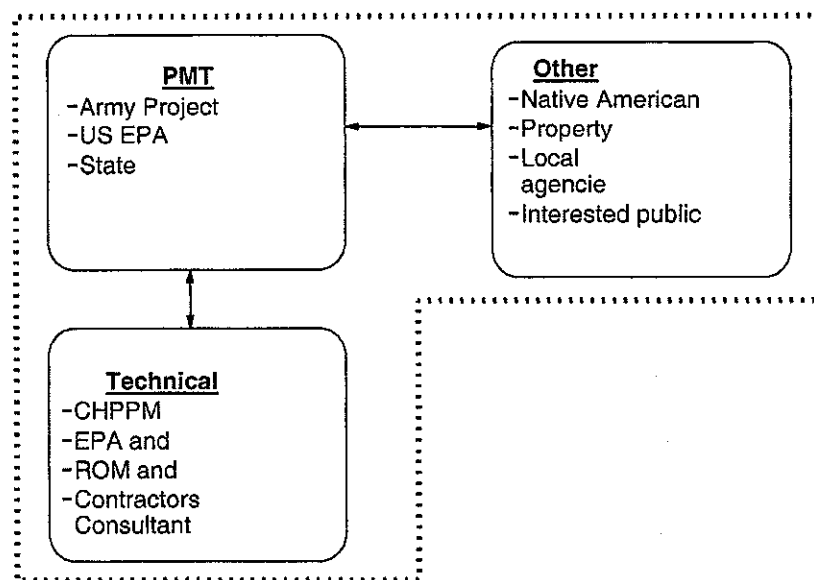
Introduction

At Army installations, all major stakeholders represent public assets of one kind or another. The dollars being spent are public funds. The resources being restored or protected are public lands and facilities. Moreover, it is public health and the environment that is being protected through environmental response actions. As a result, all parties should have the same goal: to restore the environment to a level that poses no unacceptable risk at reasonable cost. However, differences traditionally arise in defining the level of acceptability, and in determining the level of comfort in alternative approaches to achieving acceptable levels of risk. Historic antagonism between and among the parties arises from different perceptions about uncertainties and different levels of comfort in dealing with risk management. Traditional "barriers" to streamlining can be overcome through teamwork and early agreement.

Principle 1: Developing effective communication and cooperation with a Project Management Team (PMT) is essential.

The stakeholders are represented in the decision-making process by the Project Management Team (PMT). In general, the PMT is comprised of a representative of any entity that has the ability to say no to a decision. Under most Federal Facility Agreements (FFA) that means at a minimum, the PMT will include the Army (as lead agency), EPA, and the appropriate State and local regulators (Figure 2-1). In rare circumstances, there may be other parties such as Indian nations, the proposed new site owners, or co-occupants that have sufficient standing to be included in the PMT, but generally speaking, these parties do not have primary decision-making authority. Technical staff and contractors are never a part of the PMT. While these parties play a major role in providing input to the decision-making process and implementing decisions, they are not decision makers and have no legal standing with respect to required actions by the PMT.

Figure 2-1: Project Management Team Approach

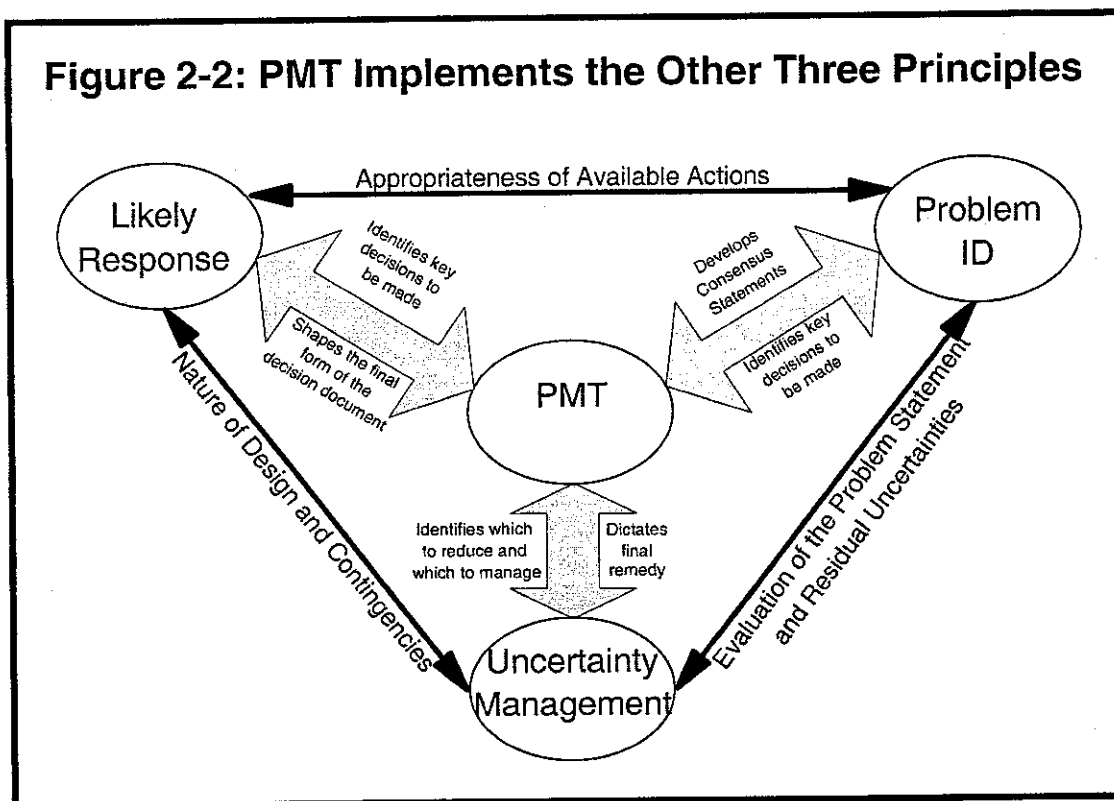


One of the keys to bringing perceptions closer together so that the PMT functions as a team is to foster frequent, early, and open communication. All parties need to know the facts so that they can participate in the decision-making process in a meaningful way. Without open communication, one or more of the parties become fearful that they have been denied critical information and, therefore, are reluctant to accept the defined problems and preferred solutions.

Better communication and a team approach engenders the cooperation needed to move forward expeditiously. Ultimately, the objective is for the PMT to own the process and the product. As a consequence, all members of the PMT need to be fully engaged in the planning, evaluation, and decision-making activities so that when plans and decisions are taken to the public they can be endorsed by the PMT as a whole. This section discusses the organization and operational mode a PMT may want to adopt to facilitate communication and cooperation throughout the program.

Critical to the success of the Principles at any Army installation is the successful cooperation and communication, both internally and externally, of the PMT. As illustrated in Figure 2-2, the level of success in implementing the other three Principles is directly related to the effectiveness of early communication and cooperative planning efforts. How the PMT applies the Principles will vary from site to site and from project to project, and is a process that will evolve over time.

Figure 2-2: PMT Implements the Other Three Principles



Organization

Each member of the PMT represents the public's best interests, albeit from different perspectives. Moving ahead requires proper alignment to assure that all perspectives are adequately addressed. This approach does not limit in any way a regulatory enforcement authority or sovereign immunity, but provides an opportunity for regulatory agencies to use their authorities to move the project forward. Issues that could potentially slow or stop progress are known early in the process, rather than later during document review. Key decision makers on the PMT need to constantly strive to reach consensus on the major aspects of the project. This begins with sharing information, planning, identifying decisions to be made, and setting decision criteria at the outset of a project, ensuring all decision-making authorities are aware of factors that will impact the project moving forward and seeking the opportunity to develop early consensus. Every member of the PMT must be fully engaged and responsible for the project's scope, direction, objectives, and results. To make this process work, all members of the PMT need to own the product as well as the process.

A key example of the value in reaching early and continuing consensus is the need to develop an exit strategy. The goal of any remediation project is ultimately to reach completion by bringing the site to an acceptable, selected end

state. However, often times it is difficult, unless agreed to in advance, to know that the end state has been reached and, therefore, at what point the project is complete. An important element of all PMT discussions should be the development of an exit strategy designed to achieve project closeout quickly. The earlier the parameters defining closeout can be defined and agreed upon, the more streamlined and efficient the activities will be that are required to achieve closeout. Conversely, closeout will be costly and delayed if members of the PMT have differing perceptions about basic closure requirements.

Operation

The PMT operates through continuous communication and by holding meetings and conference calls in which decisions are identified, discussed, and made. This means that each member is informed of all planning, results, and other issues throughout the project. For example, all members of the PMT should be aware of major uncertainties (e.g., unknown conditions or parameter values) that could jeopardize project objectives. The PMT also understands and agrees on those contingencies that will be implemented in the case that negative impacts of uncertainties are encountered. When there are surprises, they should be surprises to all parties. Presumably, if everyone agrees to the methods being applied and the use of the data to support making identified decisions (and this agreement is clearly communicated and documented), there will be little controversy about results after the fact. Therefore, there will be few instances where work needs to be redone, or members of the PMT (or other stakeholders) second guess the efficacy of methods after their application.

Key activities of the PMT can be categorized into three main areas:

- Planning - What is the problem (Problem Definition)?
 - What are the decisions that address the problem?
 - What are the decision criteria?
 - What data support making the decisions?
 - What confidence level does each decision require?
 - What are the consequences of a decision error?
- Communicating
 - Internally to technical support
 - Upward to management
 - Outward to other stakeholders
- Documenting
 - Formalize agreements
 - Ensure permanence of knowledge and decisions (knowledge management)

Planning activities focus on identification of the decision logic to be followed. For example, the PMT needs to identify what decisions will be made, what criteria will be used to make the decisions, and what actions will be taken if criteria are exceeded or not exceeded. The PMT is responsible for communicating this information "up the chain" and outward to other stakeholders. Communication does not mean that reports of completed work are merely distributed to interested parties. Communication should include briefings on the scope of planned activities, the alternative courses of action for which decisions need to be made, the criteria and rationale for those decisions, and the consequences of making a decision error (an incorrect decision). Furthermore, the PMT must document the decisions that are made. This will ensure programmatic progress survives personnel changes and ensures that knowledge will be passed on to future stakeholders and those ultimately responsible for stewardship if constituents are left in place for extended periods of time.

It is key to remember that while documentation must be produced to communicate and memorialize the process and results, documentation in and of itself is neither an objective nor an end point. Documents should never be set as milestones. Milestones should be completion of defined tasks. Documents can then be used to memorialize the completion and archive supporting information. These documents may represent defined points in a project schedule.

The PMT functions through the life of the environmental restoration program, applying the other three Principles as appropriate. The means by which those Principles are applied evolves with the stage of restoration activities being conducted as follows:

- Pre-Decision Document - PMT
 - Prepares problem statement
 - Selects candidate response actions for consideration
 - Recommends preferred alternative
 - Approves uncertainty management strategy
- Response Design and Implementation - PMT
 - Develops consensus interpretation of decision document
 - Defines/agrees on remedial action objectives
 - Interprets performance measurements and monitoring data
 - Approves designs
 - Determines need to implement contingency plans
- Post-Construction Completion or Closure - PMT
 - Conducts 5-year reviews
 - Reviews monitoring data
 - Directs implementation of contingencies when necessary

Implementation

Although the Principles themselves are not new, effectively applying the concepts into restoration projects is an evolving process. The level of success in implementing the Principles is directly related to the effectiveness of the PMT. However, there are significant challenges that the PMT will face throughout of the project:

- Lack of empowerment;
- Budget constraints;
- Fear of sharing (and taking) responsibility; and
- Existing relationships.

Empowerment is a common problem for members of the PMT. Project managers are often not authorized to make agreements. When consensus is reached by the PMT only to have higher authorities withhold approval, future cooperation is jeopardized. Understandably, participants are reluctant to expend time and effort in decisions that they have no confidence will survive. If PMT representatives cannot be delegated decision authority, they should increase the frequency of their communication with their management to better identify those decisions that will sustain management support.

Budget constraints are particularly challenging. The Army representative on the PMT has no ability to make budget decisions. Moreover, budget cycles are not well suited to timely response to new information as it is developed. As a consequence, it is common for consensus decisions to be thwarted on the basis of a lack of available funds for implementation. The impact of this dilemma on cooperation within the PMT can be minimized by open discussion of budget constraints on an ongoing basis, and prioritization of activities within individual budget categories. In addition, there needs to be concerted efforts by the PMT Army representative to fairly articulate the PMT decisions in requests for funding submitted to management. At the same time, EPA and State representatives need to recognize the funding constraints are not superimposed by installation staff and should not create barriers to a smooth working relationship at the PMT level.

There is a natural tendency for installations to not want to share all information. This is particularly true of information that might make contamination seem worse than it is, or lead to more extensive cleanup requirements. Similarly, regulators may be reluctant to share responsibility for decisions that may not be popular with some stakeholders or that appear to imply too close a working relationship with the Army. These attitudes are counterproductive. As indicated previously, open communication of all data is essential to increasing the likelihood of making the right decision. While all significant information will ultimately come out, sharing the information early can minimize the potential for damaging relationships and maximizes the chances of finding mutually agreeable

interpretations. (This is not to say that all data should be shared prior to validation. If all parties are comfortable with the context and uses of unvalidated data, it may be possible to disseminate it within the PMT; but unvalidated data can be taken out of context and lead to unnecessary expenditures associated with subsequently having to lay invalid data to rest.)

Existing relationships can create barriers to cooperation. If members of the PMT have had an adversarial relationship in the past, it may be difficult to put that aside and work cooperatively in the future. This is particularly true if there are basic trust issues involved. In these circumstances, there may be merit in changing one or more of the members of the PMT to facilitate getting a fresh start.

In the end, the best approach to meeting these challenges is to develop a working team and jointly make decisions from the start. Some attributes of a successful team include the following:

- **A common goal**, mission or purpose which is accepted by all members (it may help to articulate this in writing at the outset).
- **Interdependence** within the team -- members understand how they need each other in order to be successful.
- **Shared decision making** in working toward the common goal.
- **Mutual accountability** for team performance.
- A sense of **"sink or swim" together** as a group.
- **Competition is external** to the team; a group with internal competition is not a team.

Every member of a successful team is focused on the common goal. The team is goal-oriented, rather than a group of people focused on personal tasks.

Summary

Early, frequent, and open communication within the PMT and externally to management and other stakeholders along with cooperation amongst team members allows the PMT to function as a single entity focused on execution of their responsibilities. Time and effort lost as a result of poorly functioning teams and miscommunication drain valuable resources and create additional barriers to streamlining. Only when the PMT functions as a team can it apply the other Principles of Environmental Restoration effectively.